

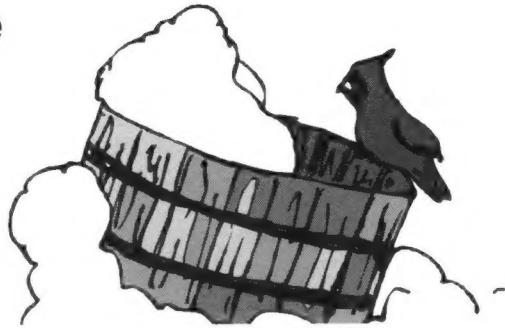
Tale Feathers

Dec/Jan 2004

Volume 71
Number 8

Join The Flock At The SLAS Holiday Party

*On Sunday, December 5, 2004 from
1-4 p.m.
At The Green Center*



Once again this year, the St. Louis Audubon Society will be joining the Webster Groves Nature Study Society to celebrate the holidays at The Green Center in University City. This special event will be held on Sunday, December 5 from 1 to 4 p.m. The Green Center serves its surrounding community as a natural gathering place with youth programs, nature workshops, and herb and prairie gardens in the heart of University City. Its mission is conservation, education, and enjoyment of the natural world. The Center offers a congenial atmosphere of meeting rooms surrounded by a beautiful outdoor space. If weather permits, tours of the grounds will be offered by the staff.

Please bring an appetizer, dessert or casserole to share. The Center's kitchen has a microwave for warming food. Beverages will be provided.

While you are enjoying the holiday atmosphere and refreshments, be sure to enter the free drawings for nature-related gift items donated by our members! There will also be a display of holiday decorations and ornaments made of natural materials, provided by Shaw Nature Reserve's Barb Troutman and Karen Bryan.

This year, the Center has agreed to allow limited parking in the driveway for senior members attending the party. Others are asked to park in the Kaufman Park lot next to the Center. Directions to The Green Center at 8025 Blackberry Avenue:

From Highway 40: Turn north on Hanley Road and continue to Delmar Blvd. Continue on Hanley Road to Blackberry Avenue, the fourth street north of Delmar. Turn left (west) on Blackberry Avenue.

From Interstate 170: Take the Delmar Blvd. Exit from I-170. Go east on Delmar three stoplights to North and South Road. Turn left (north) and proceed to Blackberry Avenue. Turn left (west) on Blackberry Avenue.

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St. Louis Audubon Society

St. Louis Audubon Scholarships and Awards

In the October issue of this newsletter, our different awards and scholarships were listed. We would like to give here the names of some of the past recipients:

Conservationist of the Year:

Paul Bauer
Roger Pryor
Leo Drey
Earth Angels
Doug Ladd

Robert J. Terry Award:

Katherine Chambers
Owen Sexton
Jim Jackson
Jim Holsen

Legislator of the Year:

Sen. Wayne Goode
Joan Bray
Sen. Patrick Dougherty

We hope that this will inspire many of you to nominate possible recipients for these different awards. Nominations can be sent, until the end of February, to either of us:

Julie Leeman,
13021 Barrett Crossing Ct.
St. Louis 63122

Lynne Breakstone
7220 Princeton
St. Louis 63130
Scholarships and Awards
Committee

President's Report

Dave Tylka

I have become as grumpy as a grizzly bear awakened from hibernation ever since our home computer crashed a few days ago. Although most of our text files were backed up, some of our nature picture files were not backed up and presumably lost. If this has ever happened to you, you know how I feel. As we surround ourselves more and more with technology, we feel helpless and overwhelmed when something like this occurs.

It's these complexities of technology, though, that help us realize the beauty of the more "simple" things that surround us—fall colors, frost flowers, freshly fallen snow, birds darting in and out of our feeders, and the relationships we share with family and friends. The upcoming holiday season helps me sort things out and try to put things back in perspective.

Over the holidays I like to relive some of the natural highlights of the year by looking at photos (saved on back-up files) and enjoying time with family and friends. On behalf of the St. Louis Audubon Society, we hope you enjoy the holiday season with family and friends and are blessed with good health, clean air to breathe and clean water to drink.

"Crows, mourning doves and the balance of nature"

Most of you are aware of the fact that West Nile Virus has decimated the numbers of crows, blue jays and other birds in our area during the past few years. What you may not know is that, as a result, the mourning dove population has mushroomed because crows are one of the major predators of mourning dove nests. During the nesting season Crows as well as other birds need the extra calcium easily found in the eggs of other birds. We at Wild Bird Rehabilitation get to see first-hand the changes in local avian populations. Because of WNV, we have taken in very few crows and jays for the last two years. We know, furthermore, that this virus has cut into other types of birds such as chickadees and titmice since we have taken in less of them than in past years. We hear some people say that they don't "like" crows and that they are not sorry to see the decline in their numbers. Nature does seem to prefer balance; with fewer crows, the mourning dove population seems to have gone out of balance. It will be interesting to observe the length of this imbalance and how it may affect other species.

Carol Kershner, Director -- Wild Bird Rehabilitation
Lynne Breakstone

St Louis Audubon Society's Bi-Annual Birdseed Sale

Friday, January 21st from 5 p.m. until 7 p.m
Saturday, January 22nd from 9 a.m. until 11 a.m.

Order for the early winter season and be prepared to feed your backyard birds and ensure that they will survive during the coldest winter months. Order by Tuesday, January 18 for the 21st and 22nd pickup. Seed must be picked by October 27th at the latest unless other arrangements have been made.

Make check payable to St Louis Audubon Society and mail to:

Anne Rankin Horton
718 Inglestone Court
Manchester, MO 63021
(636) 256-3402

Pick up will be at the Wild Bird Center in Creve Coeur:

12792 Olive Boulevard
Bellerive Plaza
Creve Coeur, MO 63141
(314) 439-9453

All proceeds from the birdseed sale fund education outreach programs.

Wild Bird Center is located approximately two miles west of I-270 near Mason Road and Timber Run in the Bellerive Plaza. Look for the store between Schnucks and Silkys. Any Audubon member who would like to shop during this time gets a 10 percent discount off any merchandise purchased at the store.

Birdseed Order Form

Make checks payable to: St. Louis Audubon Society and mail to: Anne Rankin Horton 718 Inglestone Court Manchester, MO 63021 (636)256-3402 email:anne.horton@att.net	Bird Seed Type Lbs/Bag Qty Cost Subtotal
Name:	Black Oil Sunflower 25 lb _____ \$11 50 lb _____ \$20
Address:	No-Waste Mix no milo, has hulls 25 lb _____ \$9 50 lb _____ \$15
Phone:	Premium No-Waste no milo, no hulls 20 lb _____ \$10 40 lb _____ \$18
	Safflower Seed 25 lb _____ \$24 50 lb _____ \$43
	Thistle/Niger 10 lb _____ \$15
	Total: _____

Audubon Camp at Hog Island, Maine One Educator's Experience

Mark your calendar for Tuesday, January 18 at 7:30 p.m. at the Creve Coeur Community Center.

Jennifer Smith, Seniors Program Coordinator at the Missouri Botanical Garden, will provide a beautiful presentation of her experience at this little-known gem along the Maine coastline. Whether or not you are considering such a sensory- and knowledge-filled vacation, you're sure to enjoy her pictures of the amazing flora and fauna.

Established in 1936 and located just 60 miles northeast of Portland, the Audubon Camp at Hog Island remains a cozy, evergreen paradise that seems a million miles from anywhere. It's a 330-acre coastal wildlife sanctuary where top naturalists and educators lead weekend and week-long camp programs, many held at sites Roger Tory Peterson, Rachel Carson and Andrew Wyeth declared personal favorites. Programs are offered in several areas of cultural and natural history, including ornithology. Lodging is in restored 19th-century farm buildings, with exceptionally delicious meals. Outside the classroom, guests are free to roam the spruce-fir forest, fern-filled meadows and rocky coastal beaches.

EDUCATOR ALERT! St. Louis Audubon has been providing area educators tuition scholarships to this amazing facility for years. Board members will be available with applications and to answer any questions about the program. If you know an educator that might be interested, please bring them along—they need NOT be a member to receive the scholarship.

From I-270 and Ladue, go east on Ladue, left at the light at New Ballas, go/mile north to the Creve Coeur Government Center at 300 N. New Ballas. The community center's multi-purpose room is on the ground level in the northwest corner.

Questions, call Mitch Leachman at 314-739-5112.

Horseshoe Lake Bird Trip Highlights

The ST. LOUIS AUDUBON SOCIETY took the Horseshoe Lake (Madison County, Illinois; metro east St. Louis) tour today with a friendly group of 20 birders. Leaders were Paul Bauer and this reporter.

Ducks were virtually nonexistent in the main section of the lake, and I'm taking a wild guess here that it was because of the hunters, out in force. In addition, the steady, day-long wind made birding somewhat difficult. At one point we watched three American Robins fly by, crabbing into the wind at ~ 20 deg. to maintain a straight track. One duck flying downwind could have had a ground speed of about 90 MPH. A small flock of shorebirds rocketed by and could not be ID'd; they looked like peeps. Anyway, for the day: **57 SPECIES TOTAL.**

We did find the ducks, eventually, with the largest number along Layton Rd., where the railroad tracks cross. This body of water has no duck blinds. Of the 12 SPECIES OF DUCK seen today, the one best represented was GADWALL. Also today, the group had good looks at BONAPARTE'S GULLS; an immature RED-SHOULDERED HAWK; AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN; and at the end of the day a pair of AMERICAN KESTRELS performing an aerial ballet over an enormous flock of CROWS milling about on the ground. We had 7 SPARROW SPECIES, and most of the birds seemed to be pushed down by the wind.

On the drive home I stopped at the campus of Washington University to look for the Peregrine Falcons that have been reported recently, but did not see them. However, walking back to the car I saw one PARHELIA, or SUN DOG, in the sky over the quadrangle.

For additional information or directions, please contact me off-MOBirds. Read more about the ST. LOUIS AUDUBON SOCIETY at: www.stlouisaudubon.org.
Mike Thelen
St. Louis County, MO
jetmst@mindspring.com



One Thousand Pelicans

Jim Wilson

The first thunderclap woke me up at 4:00 am. That is seldom a good thing when you are leading a wetland field trip for a group of college students. I have found that students aren't high on rain... or mornings... or field trips, for that matter. These were no exception and several of them (maybe most of them) dozed through the van ride west on I-70, across the Missouri River, through St. Peters and north on highway 79. A couple of them noticed the short dolomite bedrock that defines the edge of the floodplain along the road. A few more saw the billboards acknowledging that this was indeed a floodplain (because it floods). By the time we were approaching Elsberry almost every one was wide awake and enjoying the spectacular fall color on the hills as well as my spectacular handling of the vehicle while pointing out birds, plants and geological points of interest.

Just a few miles north of Elsberry as we entered the small town of Annada, we turned right at the sign for the Clarence Cannon National Wildlife Refuge. We found ourselves on a narrow gravel road punctuated with meadowlarks, a turkey vulture and a couple of killdeer. Less than a mile down the road we pulled into the parking lot at the refuge headquarters. The sun was actually shining by this time, and as we got out of the vehicle the musky smells of sycamore, rain and earth reminded us that we weren't in the city anymore. This was starting to be a day of promise.

David Ellis, the refuge manager met us at the headquarters building and shared some insights about the refuge. Clarence Cannon National Wildlife Refuge includes some 3750 acres of fields, roads and wetlands adjacent to the Mississippi River. The refuge was established in 1964 and Dave has been there for the last 10 years. He showed us aerial photos of the area surrounding the refuge and we could see that it has mostly been converted to agricultural uses. Dave spoke of the importance of areas like Clarence Cannon as a part of a national system of refuges and he talked about the importance of the refuge to migrating birds. Migrating birds coming down the Mississippi flyway depend upon large pieces of natural habitat like that provided by the



national refuges, state conservation areas and private wetland holdings. "We are all about birds here", he said. "We like snakes and bats and turtles, but we are really all about birds." With that, we headed out to see some birds.

We toured the refuge, looking at pools of mallards and pintails. We saw crop fields and moist soil units where carefully timed drawdown of standing water could determine what food and cover plants would become established. We saw harriers moving rhythmically over the marsh, white rump patch flashing. An immature bald eagle perched in a snag just off the road and gave us a quizzical look as we gawked from the van window, not daring to get out lest he move on. Dave showed us the eagle nest which probably had produced the bird. Eagles have nested on the area since the early '90s.

Then we saw them-at first just a flash of white off in the distance. Pelicans. "I'll use my pelican call and maybe draw them in", Dave said. A little birding humor there. We moved on to the concrete spillway that allows the river to overflow and flood the wetlands when river levels are high. As we walked down the spillway, the first wave of pelicans came over us at treetop level. Whirling slowly in the air, they turned to take advantage of the stiff breeze. Facing the wind, they settled in slow motion into a small wetland pool just in front of us. We hurried into the trees surrounding the pool so as to be less conspicuous, although the birds undoubtedly had complete knowledge of our presence. We stood there in awe as wave after wave of these huge white birds with the black wing tips drifted right over us and followed their fellows into the small pool. We watched then as the whole flock fed, dipping and re-dipping those improbable beaks into the water almost in unison.

"This is most unusual", Dave whispered.

"They almost never use small pools like this. I see them mostly out on the river or in bigger pools. We didn't see big bunches of pelicans along the river here until the '93 flood. They have been pretty regular visitors ever since".

Quietly we slipped away, feeling that we had been privileged to share a special moment with special creatures of the air and water. As we headed north to Ted Shanks Conservation Area, someone in the back of the van mused,

"Do you think Dave really does have a pelican call"?

SLAS Birding Trips for December2004 and January & February 2005

John Solodar

December 11, Saturday - Riverlands . This trip starts at 9:00 AM at the Teal Pond Parking lot. Trip leaders are Dave Rogles (he knows REDA better than anyone) and Pat Lueders. Bring lots of warm clothes as the winter wind can be quite stressful at REDA. We'll be looking for odd gulls, lots of ducks and maybe some surprises such as scoters.

January 8, Saturday - Riverlands. We return to our winter hotspot for a 9:00 AM trip led by Paul Bauer and Mike Thelen. This is the time of year when the really rare gulls often show up. With luck we also have some longspurs and Snow Buntings around. Again, dress warmly against the winter winds at REDA. Some of those hunter's charcoal/iron filings hand warmers will also serve you well.

January 22, Saturday - Forest 44/Lone Elk Park. This has proven to be an interesting trip the last few years with Rusty Blackbirds, among other things, in the area. The trip will start at 8:00 AM at Forest 44 and will be led by Mike Thelen and Josh Uffman.

February 5, Saturday - Riverlands. This is our annual afternoon trip to Riverlands that starts at 1:00 PM. Expect lots of good gull talk, but dress very warmly. We expect to see some ducks as well plus some wintering sparrows and maybe some surprises. Mike Grant and Josh Uffman will lead this trip. This author, however, will be in Miami in preparation for a flight to Quito, Ecuador. Buena suerte, amigos.

February 19, Saturday - Baldwin Lake/Peabody Coal Strip Mines. This all day trip starts at 9:00 AM, so bring a lunch and lots of warm clothing. Torrey Berger and Dave Rogles will lead us as we search for Snow Geese, Ross' Geese, ducks, Loggerhead Shrikes, Short-eared Owls and lots of other goodies. Bring an Illinois map as it can be a little tricky navigating home from the Peabody Coal Strip Mines. An FRS radio is also very handy on this trip.

Upcoming WGNSS walks on Sundays.

December 12, Sunday - Riverlands. Meet trip leader Dave Rogles at 8:00 AM at the Teal Pond parking lot. Note change of date from original date of 12/5/04.

December 19, Sunday - Baldwin Lake. Trip will be led by Kent Lannert. Meet at 8:00 AM in the boat launch parking lot.

January 9, Sunday - Busch Conservation Area. Meet trip leaders Jackie Chain and Rose Ann Bodman at the head of the Fallen Oak Trail near the HQ at 8:00AM

How to get there

Baldwin Lake. Take I-270 across from Jefferson Barracks Bridge to IL. Take Hwy 3 south to Redbud. Go east on Hwy 154 to Baldwin, IL. Follow signs in town to Lake Baldwin. Meet in parking lot inside gate.

Busch Conservation Area Take U.S.40/I-64 west into St. Charles County. Take Hwy 94 south from U.S 40 about 1 mile to Hwy D. Turn right and go about 1.5 miles to the entrance on the right. Turn left at the "T" to Hampton Lake and meet in the parking lot. For trips using a H.Q starting point turn right at the "T".

Forest 44 - Take I-44 west from I-270 and go 3.5 miles to Hwy 141. Travel south on Hwy 141 to Meramec Station Road (first stoplight) and turn right. Follow Meramec Station Road to Hillsboro Road. Turn left on Hillsboro Rd for 0.4 mile to parking area on the right.

Riverlands - Take Hwy 367 north from I-270. The designation changes to Hwy 67 just beyond the 4th traffic light, but continue. Turn right on last road just before the Clark Bridge at the Mississippi River. (Fisca gas station at this turn.) Turn right on the first road and park in the Teal Pond parking lot.

Christmas Bird Count

Clarence Cannon CBC

Dec. 30, 2004

They really need birders so please consider helping out. Contact compiler Scott Schuette for details. He is at school now in AZ, but you can contact him at: sschuette01@hotmail.com (preferred) ; 636-795-9215 (ONLY after 8:30 PM CT) or his father, Bruce Schuette at baessch@nothnbut.net ; 636-528-6544.

Notes From Hog Island

Beth Fallstrom

The sky is streaked with wispy clouds, reflected in the water of the bay, a colorful rainbow of lobster pot markers rippling on the silvery water. I watch reading *The Lobster Chronicles* by Linda Greenlaw, from a room lined with windows in my dormitory. This book is my anchor for the week. It's what I turn to in solitary moments when I'm not writing and it's my textbook for life in this part of the world: the Audubon summer camp on Hog Island, Maine.

It's so peaceful, only the occasional roar of a lobster boat or gulls calling intruding on the tranquility of the moment. At this time, I'm on my own, reading and enjoying the view. Soon it will be time for a meal or a class. I'll be called to an activity by the resounding clang of the Hog Island bell, a bell that rivals the Liberty Bell in size. The bell directs the campers' lives: when to get up, when to eat, when to gather for an activity or trip.

I savor the time I have alone, reflecting, writing and reading. And, I revel in the classes that I enjoy: the tides, plant and animal life in the sea, birds and insects. Everything is new for me. I often feel out of my league. The kindergarten children I teach must feel this during the first few weeks of school.

The instructors are inspirational. Their zeal and commitment to nature and the world astonish me. They are all exceptional people with extraordinary life stories. However, they deem their life stories unimportant when compared to the animals and plants they study and love. I take copious notes during every exploration, slide show, walk, fearing that I'll forget an essential fact if I don't write everything down.

I decide to bring back a bag full of puffin souvenirs to share with my kindergartners. I raid the Hog Island store and study the books, clothing, toys and necessities that are arrayed on shelves. The store is small but I see several items I know my kids will love: a stuffed puffin, books, a pine-scented pillow and puffin post cards. I'll let each child share the bag with her family and then we'll culminate our study of puffins with a trip to the St. Louis Zoo.

My trip to Hog Island was an experience I'll never forget. Great people, wonderful educational opportunities and time on my own made it an exceptional time in my life.

Tale Feathers

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St. Louis Audubon Society 2004 - 2005

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Attention!

The deadline for the Feb. issue is
January 10 Send inquiries to Anne by
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All applicants please check: New, or Renewal Use this form to join St. Louis Audubon / National Audubon

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